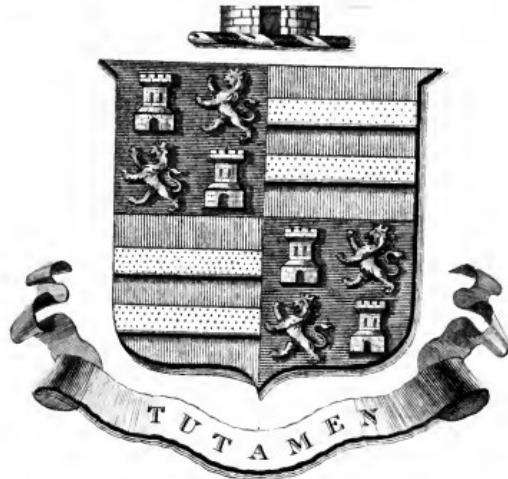




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# SHAKSPEARE.

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*AN ODE*

FOR

His Three-hundredth Birthday.

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Immortal ! risen to thy Rest,  
Immortal ! throned among the Blest,  
Immortal ! long an heir sublime  
Of realms outreaching space and time,—  
How shall we dare, or hope, to raise  
A fitting homage of high praise  
To please thy Spirit, spher'd on high  
Where planets roll and comets fly ?  
How may not thy pure fame be marr'd  
By the damp breath of earthly bard,  
Presuming in his zeal too bold  
To gild the bright refinèd gold ?

Or how canst Thou, fill'd with God's love,  
And tranced among the saints above,  
Endure that men should seem and be  
Idolators in praise of Thee ?  
Forgive our love, forgive our zeal,—  
We cannot guesf how spirits feel ;  
And may our homage offered thus  
Please HIM who made both thee, and us !

JJ.

**I**mmortal also on this darker Earth  
As in those brightest spheres,  
Now will we consecrate our Shakspeare's birth;  
    This day three hundred years !  
And so from age to age for evermore  
    His glory shall extend,  
With men of every land the wide world o'er,  
    Till Time itself shall end !  
For, he is our's ; and well with pride and joy  
    England may blefs her son,  
The Stratford scholar and the Warwick boy  
    That every crown hath won !  
Let others boast their wifest and their best,  
    To each a prize may fall ;  
Genius gives one apiece to all the rest,  
    But Shakspeare claims them all !

**H**omer, in majestic eloquence,  
**A** A Terence, for keen wit and stinging sense,  
 Brighter than Pindar in his loftiest flight,  
 Darker than Æschylus for deeds of night,  
 An Ovid, in the story-pictured page,  
 A Juvenal, to lash the vicious age,  
 Graceful as Horace and more skill'd to please,  
 Tender as pity-stirring Sophocles,  
 Free as Anacreon, as Martial neat,  
 Than Virgil's self more delicately sweet,—  
 O let those ancients bend before Thee now,  
 And pile their many chaplets on one brow!—  
 Milton was great, and of divinest song,  
 Spenser melodious, Chaucer rough and strong,—  
 The vigorous Dryden, and the classic Gray,  
 And awful Dante, soaring far away,  
 Schiller and Goethe, stirring up the strife,  
 And Molière, dropping laughter into life,  
 Burns, a full spring of nature, Hood of wit,  
 And Tennyson, most rare and exquisite,  
 To each and all belongs the laurell'd crown,—  
 And woe to him who drags their honours down,—  
 Yet, Shakspeare, Thou wert all these lights combined,  
 O many-sided crystal of mankind!

**T**he jealous Moor, the thoughtful Dane,  
**E** The witty rare fat knight,

And grand old Lear half-insane,  
And fell Iago's spite,  
And Romeo's love, and Tybalt's hate,  
And Bolingbroke in regal state,  
And he that murdered sleep,—  
And ruthless Shylock's bloody bond,  
And Prosper with his broken wand  
    Long buried fathoms deep !  
Frank Juliet too,—and that soft pair  
Helen and Hermia, lilies fair  
    As growing on one stem,  
Love-crazed Ophelia, drown'd, ah ! drown'd,  
And wanton Cleopatra, crown'd  
    With Egypt's diadem ;  
The young Miranda most admired,  
Cordelia's filial heart,  
Sly Beatrice with wit inspired,  
    And Ariel's tricksey part,  
Fair Rosalind,—sweet banishèd,  
And gentle Desdemona—dead !—  
Ay, these—all these, and crowds beside,  
Heroes, jesters, courtiers, clowns,  
Girls in grief, or kings in pride,  
    Threats and crimes, and jokes, and frowns,  
Witches, fairies, ghosts, and elves,  
All our fancies, all ourselves,—  
O ! Thou hast pictured with thy pen  
All phases of all hearts of men,  
And in thy various page survives  
The Panorama of our lives !

O Paragon unthought before,  
 O miracle of self-taught lore,  
 A universe of wit and worth,  
 The admirable Man of earth,  
 There is nor thing, nor thought, nor whim,  
 Untouch'd and unadorn'd by him ;  
 No theme unsung, no truth untold  
 Of Earth's museum, new or old :  
 All Nature's hidden things he saw,  
 Intuitive to every law ;  
 Glancing with supernal scan  
 At all the knowledge spelt by man ;  
 While, for each rule and craft of Art  
 He grasp'd it amply, whole and part :  
 Like travel-wise Ulysses well he knew  
 Peoples and cities, men and manners too ;  
 With shrewd but ever charitable ken  
 He read, and wrote out fair, the hearts of men ;  
 Yet, in self-knowledge vers'd, a sage outright,  
 His giant soul was humble in its might !

O gentle, happy, modest mind,  
 O genial, cheerful, frank and kind,  
 Not even could domestic strife  
 Sour the sweetnes of thy life,—  
 But, wheresoe'er thy foot might roam,  
 Divorced from that Xantippe'd home,  
 Friends ever found thee,—ay, and foes,  
 Cordial to these, and kind to those ;  
 Brave, loving, patient, generous, just, and good,—  
 Beloved by all, our matchless Shakspeare stood !

**W**here are thy glorious works unknown ?  
 Who hath not heard thy fame ?  
 On every shore, in every zone,  
 The World, with glad acclaim,  
 Yea, from the cottage to the throne,  
 Hath magnified thy name !  
 From far Australia to Vancouver's pines,  
 From the High Alps to Russia's deepest mines,  
 From China, with her English lesson learnt,  
 To Chili, wailing for her daughters burnt ;  
 There, everywhere, our Shakspeare breathes and moves  
 In the sweet ether of all human loves !—  
 Where rent America now writhes in woe,  
 Where Nile and Danube, Thames and Ganges flow,  
 Wherever England fails, and human kind  
 Anywhere feels in heart, and thinks in mind,  
 There, everywhere, our Shakspeare's voice is heard,  
 By him all souls are thrill'd, and cheer'd, and stirr'd ;  
 Each passion flows or ebbs, as Shakspeare speaks,  
 Hate knits the brow, or terror pales the cheeks,  
 Love lights the eyes, or pity melts the heart,  
 And all men bow beneath our Poet's art !

**W**hat monument to rear,  
 What worthy offering?—  
 Nought lacks thy glory here  
 Of all thy sons can bring:  
 Long since, a twin-sphered brother spake,  
 How vain it were to raise  
 To such a Name, for Memory's sake,  
 Its pyramid of praise:  
 Our Shakspere needs no sculptured stones,  
 No temple for his honoured bones!  
 But haply, in his native street  
 Beside the rescued home  
 Hallowed by his infant feet  
 Whereto all pilgrims roam,  
 A College well might rear its head,  
 That Townsman's name to bear,  
 And brother-actors' sons be bred  
 To light and learning there!  
 And, for great London and its throngs,—  
 To Shakspere of old right belongs  
 The Shakspere Bridge, with Shakspere scenes  
 Sculptured upon its pannell'd screens,  
 Colossus-like the Thames to span,  
 And telling every passing man  
 Where a poor player in his youth  
 Served Heaven and Earth by mimic truth,  
 And wrapped in Art's and Nature's robe,  
 Leafed,—'twas his Heritage—the Globe!—

**G**reat Magician for all time,  
 Denizen of every clime,  
 Darling poet of mankind,  
 Master of the human mind,  
 Nature's very priest and king,—  
 Take the gifts thy children bring !  
 Let thy Spirit, hovering o'er  
 Thine earthly home and haunts of yore,  
 In its wisdom, wealth, and worth,  
 Shine upon us from above,  
 While thy kinsmen here on earth  
 Thus with pious care and love  
 Celebrate our Shakspere's birth.

*March 1864.*



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